

about it was the GOP plan allows a blank check for Governors who will see to it that the neediest and the poorest children will not benefit from the money.

This defines rather well where we are in this debate. Some of the facts seem to be different than what is being talked about. So \$120 billion later, poor kids still lag behind in reading. The percentage of those reading below basic level at the 12th grade is still 40 percent. The percentage of those writing below basic level in title I is 38 percent in the 12th grade after \$120 billion and 35 years of expenditures under this program.

We are talking about returning some of the decisionmaking to parents, to local leaders, sending dollars to the classroom rather than having them spent here, giving families greater educational choices, supporting and encouraging exceptional teachers, focusing on basic academics.

I think, if nothing more, we have defined very clearly where our priorities lie in terms of this body. I think we have a great opportunity to make some changes to bring about the results in education that all Members seek.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent I might have 4 minutes to speak about Mike Epstein, who passed away on Saturday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request of the Senator from Minnesota?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

IN MEMORY OF MIKE EPSTEIN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, first I want colleagues to know, and of course this is for Democrats and Republicans, and with Mike it is for staff and support staff and just about everybody who works here, pages and others, there will be a service for Mike in the Mansfield Room. It will be at 3 tomorrow. That is room S-207.

Many Senators came to the floor and spoke about Mike last week, on Thursday. It was wonderful. I thank you. About 70 people came to our office and did videos. All of this was sent to his family. Mike heard it. It was read to Mike. It meant a great deal to him. Letters have come in. It has really been wonderful to recognize such a great, great person.

Mike passed away on Saturday. We had a very small service for him today. He was buried in the Congressional Cemetery. Rabbi David Saperstein was there, Mike's family was there, and a few friends of many years were there. Then tomorrow we will have a service here. I look forward to that because it is wonderful, I say as a friend of Mike, the unbelievable impact he made.

I could go on forever. I will not because if I try to, the truth is I probably will not be able to go on at all. I just would not be able to do it here on the floor. I will say one unimportant thing

because it is about me, and then I will say one important thing, and then I will be finished.

The unimportant thing is in some ways I will just be lost without him. It is not like Mike was my assistant; it was like he was my teacher. But I will talk to him every day.

The second thing I want to say, which is much more important, is if I had to summarize a life, I would say the reason there has been such an outpouring of love is because Mike loved his family; he loved his work. And do you know what else? This is the best thing of all. He really loved and believed in public service. He loved his country. He was just steady. It was just who he was. He never changed.

The world is going to miss him. The Senate is going to miss him. Most important of all, his family is going to miss him. Sheila and I are going to miss him.

EVAN BAYH, who went through a real tragedy in his own family and lost his mother at an early age, was kind enough, last week, to say to me: Paul, it's not how long you live your life; it's how you live your life.

I think Mike is one of the five greatest individuals I have ever met in my life. He lived a wonderful life.

I yield the floor.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Madam President, I know all of us share in Senator WELLSTONE's grief. I know I have lost, in the past, one of my chief staff persons. You never know how important they are until they are not with you. I know the Senator's chief of staff was an outstanding person whom we all appreciated for his ability.

I am sure I speak for all Members on this side of the aisle: We share in the Senator's grief. We want him to know that.

I yield to Senator KENNEDY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, first of all, we all reach out again to Mike's family. I think all of us in the Senate, just a few days ago, were very grateful of our good friend and colleague, Senator WELLSTONE, for giving us the opportunity to add a word to the comments on the extraordinary life of Mike Epstein.

As PAUL—Senator WELLSTONE—had pointed out last week, the hours were passing along and there was very little time left. But I think the challenge for all of us is to live a productive and useful life. That is the criterion the great philosophers have defined as the purpose in life, and Mike lived that. We all are the beneficiaries of it.

Our hearts reach out to PAUL at this time, and to all the members of the family. I think Mike would feel right at home here this afternoon, where we are debating the education act. He had strong views about these issues, as well as many others.

He made life better for people in this country. We will think of him during the course of this debate, too.

I thank the Chair.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The hour of 3 p.m. having arrived, morning business is closed.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 2, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2) to extend programs and activities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Madam President, we are awaiting the arrival of the Senator from New Hampshire. I would like to say, in the interim, we would like to proceed today with other amendments. I hope by the end of the day we will be able to establish a program for the coming week, which will put us in a position where we can move the education bill forward.

At this time, I am happy to yield to the Senator from Massachusetts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I will speak briefly. As soon as the Senator from New Hampshire is on the floor, I will be glad to yield so he will be able to make a presentation on his amendment. I have had the chance, over the weekend, to study it closely. I will reserve my comments on it until we have had an opportunity to hear his presentation in the Senate this afternoon.

Just to review very briefly, we have had, now, as I understand it, probably 4 days of discussion of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Of those 4 days, 1 day was a general kind of presentation, although that was a good presentation by the speakers who had different views on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We had five votes: on Senator GORTON's amendment, what they call Straight A's; our Democratic alternative, which was introduced by Senator DASCHLE and a number of us; Senator ABRAHAM's merit pay amendment—I offered a second-degree on the Abraham amendment; and then on the Murray class size amendment.

We had indicated there would be a number of others, although a relatively small number. Actually, the total number that would be offered by this side would be somewhat less than has been usually offered in past considerations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

We were going to have proposed an amendment that would address the whole issue of the quality of our teachers, to guarantee we would have a well-